

MODERN WOMEN

GUSTAV·KOBBE

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MODERN WOMEN

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BY

GUSTAV KOBBE

Author of "Signora," "Miriam," Etc.

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TO
CLAUDIA

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I
CLOTHES

I

“**M**RS. Graves at home?”
“Yes, sir.”

“Any one with her?”

“Mr. Benton, sir. They’re upstairs in the library, sir.”

“Did Mr. Benton’s brokers call up from the city?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Did they get him?”

“No, sir. He sent word from upstairs there was no hurry;—he would call up the office later himself.”

“Put some Scotch and carbonic on the table, and let Mrs. Graves know I’m here.”

He went into the drawing-room. With a

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critical eye he regarded a tapestry panel over the door. Placing himself in a good position for light, he surveyed the paintings on the wall. Then he furrowed the rug with the point of his shoe, and watched the play of color in the soft, deep pile.

He passed into the dining-room. The butler had put the Scotch and carbonic and a silver bowl with cracked ice on the table. But Graves first looked around here, as he had in the drawing-room. The paneling was English oak, intact from an Elizabethan mansion in one of the shires, with furniture and everything complete. The bowl and the rest of the silver on the serving table were of the same period. The room, like the one from which he had come, was in admirable taste.

He was very deliberate. Pouring out his Scotch, he added a squirt from the siphon, and listened to the tinkle of the ice as it floated against the sides of the thin glass, before he drank. Through the large, oblong window,

CLOTHES

with its heavy yet clear pane, he saw his garage and, in front of it, the handsome limousine, in which he had just driven up from the station. The lawn, with its flower beds and trees, made a fine expanse, as it sloped down to the river, where his yacht lay at his private landing.

Pausing again at the drawing-room door, for a final and apparently satisfied look at the apartment, he stepped into the hall and took the lift upstairs.

II

“How’s Archie Graves—‘the coming man of Wall Street’?” asked Benton, with the supercilious drawl that was one of the things Graves hated about him.

No two men could have offered a sharper contrast to each other than Graves and the man who was dawdling about his wife. Benton was spare, tall and rather languid looking, an impression confirmed by his fair, longish

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hair, blue eyes and weak mouth ; whereas from every line of Graves' strongly marked features, as well as from his vigorous frame, spoke the determination of the man who goes ahead and doesn't bother about complications till he's gotten what he wants.

"Well?" he asked in a comprehensive way that included them both, yet ignored Benton's effort.

"We've been up the river in the yacht," said his wife. "After luncheon on the island, we shot at a target. I hit it twice!"

"I thought you hated shooting. You always said you were afraid of the noise."

"Arthur—Mr. Benton, I mean—has a pistol with a silencer attachment. It's fine! You'd never know there was shooting going on. It isn't any louder than the snap of a whip."

"Yes," said Graves with a dry laugh, "that's it—the snap of a whip! You can blow out

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your own brains, or some one else's, without being heard."

Benton looked up.

"I've never known you to talk like that, Graves."

"Oh. I've had a strenuous day.—By the way, haven't you had any word from your brokers?"

"I'd forgotten all about it," drawled Benton. "Chalmers called up. I was reading poetry to Mrs. Graves. Meant to get Chalmers on the 'phone, when I'd finished. It went clean out of my mind."

"Better get him right away. There's been something like a panic in the street:—a break in a whole lot of stocks."

Benton rose rather reluctantly.

"I had the usual margin with Chalmers. What's the use of a broker, if he can't look after your business without bothering you?"

He said this petulantly, as he left the room.

"I hope nothing has happened to his 'Si-

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lencer' stock," said the woman. "He's awfully proud of his invention. Says England wants it for the army. He's going to give you a look-in on it."

"His invention?" Graves said this with a sneer. "He must have gotten that out of the poetry-book he's been reading to you. His father bought the Silencer patent from the inventor and organized the company."

"Well you know I don't understand anything about business," she said in rather a bored tone.

"Perhaps you can understand, when I tell you that I've come home worth half again as many millions as I was, when I said goodbye to you this morning."

There was nothing bored about her expression now. She was thinking of how much more money he would give her to spend on herself, and that made her look softer and prettier than ever. She smiled as she looked up at him.

CLOTHES

"I thought that would fetch you," he said.

"You're a wonder, Archie. How did you do it?"

"Broke the market on 'Silencer.' Watched it tumble till it dropped far enough to suit me. Then grabbed up the whole lot—mine and his. While he was reading poetry to you, I was wiping up the street with him. Couldn't go to the 'phone, eh? He's there now all right, hearing that he hasn't a dollar to his name,—and to whom he's indebted for his haircut."

She didn't seem to grasp the full meaning of what he said. She was still smiling up at him, and looking her prettiest, when, from the hall below, there came a sound that resembled nothing so much as the snap of a whip.

The smile vanished. Her expression was that of a person who does not yet grasp the full significance of a sudden thing that has happened. She started to rise. Her husband closed the door and turned toward her.

"You can't go downstairs," he said. "In

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a few moments the hall will be full of servants. A scene before them would be fatal."

In a dull, hopeless way, she pulled at a tassel that hung from an arm of the chair.

"The butler," he continued, "being English, and the best trained specimen of his kind that has come under my observation, will be here shortly to tell me, quietly, what has happened. I'll step out into the hall, so that you won't have to hear any disagreeable details, if there are any."

III

When he came back, she was crying softly. He pretended not to notice it.

"Before I left town this afternoon, the Duveens called up. I suppose they'd already heard of the killing I'd made on the street. (Wonderful, how they keep track of things, isn't it?) Anyhow, they wanted to tell me that the war has thrown the Thorpe Manor tapestries on the market, and there is a Reynolds

CLOTHES

they want me to see. The tapestries will go perfectly with everything in the drawing room, and we really need an English old master over the dining room mantel. Some day next week we'll go in to see the picture and talk over the tapestries. After that, you might as well get your clothes for the summer—carte blanche—anything and everything you want."

The little hand, so delicate, so slender, that he held in his, while with his other he stroked her hair, still trembled. Every now and then, her tears came in a flood, but he could feel that she was gradually quieting down.

"Couldn't I—get the—clothes—sooner?"

She still spoke between sobs. But when he said, "Sure, little girl," he felt her creeping into his arms to be petted.

II

SPEED

I

“**A**ND now, Mrs. Harry,” said the man, who had driven up to the door in a high-powered machine, “are you ready?”

“For a fight, or a frolic?” she asked.

“Why, a fight?”

“I got my divorce a month ago, and you haven’t married me yet. Harry was slow. That’s why I chucked him for you. Now you think you have me for sure, you’re slowing up too. I want things in a hurry. Casually mention the play, and find yourself in the best seat in the house.—Refer to matrimony, and observe the man fumbling in his pocket for the ring.—Say you want to go ‘scamping,’ and discover yourself in a motor with the scenery

SPEED

whizzing past you at the rate of sixty miles an hour. That's me. That used to be you."

"Still is."

"It's been a month."

"Won't be another; nor even a week.—Meanwhile, what about saying 'supper' and finding it ready for us at the Beau Séjour?—Sixty miles by the shore road, and there in an hour!"

II

While she was getting into her motor togs, he called up the road-house. When he rang off and went out, she was already ensconced in the car, waiting for him. Impatient though he knew her to be, he paused to look at her, she was so handsome. She looked up at him and smiled. His expression told her why he had paused, and no woman is in too much of a hurry to be admired. He, however, remembering that "Harry was slow," and the consequences, got in beside her, turned on the self-starter, and they were off.

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Her look of expectant exhilaration became the thing itself, as he let out link after link of speed, and she felt the increasing rush of air against her face. They would see a car ahead of them and the next moment shoot past it. Once or twice she glanced back with a satisfied smile. Every machine they passed looked as if it were standing still in comparison with the speed at which they were dropping it behind them. Further along, she settled herself a little lower in the seat, rested the back of her head against the upper edge of the cushion, and let the wind scour her face.

"Top speed?" she asked.

"Almost."

"Then—we could go faster?"

"Yes—in an emergency."

"I'm one."

Without comment, he pressed down the accelerator.

"Wide open?"

He nodded affirmatively.

SPEED

The car seemed to strain forward, and draw away from under them. They were scooping up distance and throwing it behind them.

Far down the road she saw an automobile and wondered, at the rate at which they were tearing along, how soon they would overhaul and whizz past it. As they did so, she looked curiously amused. When they had dropped the car well behind them she gave a quick, loud laugh. He turned toward her enquiringly.

"That was Harry's outfit.—Creeps along like a turtle, doesn't it?—He's got Maude with him. Kindred souls;—equally slow! I suppose they'll marry, if they live long enough to make up their minds."

"Did they see you?"

She shook her head in the negative. "We were out of sight, before they even knew we'd passed them.—Look out!"

Listening to her, and cynically amused by what she had been saying about the man from

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whom he had taken her away, he had for a moment relaxed his tense watch of the road. They were at a sharp turn.

III

It was about twenty minutes later, when an automobile, carefully rounding this turn, came to a quick stop. Several automobiles were drawn up at one side of the road. A group of people was gathered around an overturned car. A man looked up, and, seeing the newcomers, went over to where they had halted.

"I wouldn't delay here," he said. "It's no place for the lady. There were two people in the car—a man and a woman. They've both been killed. The man's unrecognizable. The woman's pinned under the car. We're trying to jack it up, to get at the body."

They drove on. Enough time had elapsed and the scene of the accident was sufficiently remote for the disagreeable impression made

SPEED

by it to have worn off, when they reached the Beau Séjour.

"Anything special?" the man asked the head-waiter.

"Ah, yes!—We have a beautiful supper—ordered over the 'phone—for two people who haven't come.—Oysters right out of the water!—Red-heads!—Chandé *brut*, exquisitely frap-péd!"—He was going on, but the man cut in.

"Serve it," he said.—"We're in luck, Maude," he called out, as he went down the steps to help her out of the car.

III

NEWS

I

A SLIM line of smoke rose straight upward from a cigarette held between two slender fingers. From the "lounge" off the ball-room a woman was so intent, watching two men, that for some moments she had forgotten to raise the cigarette to her lips.

There was dancing—plenty of it. Couples were swaying with the sensuous grace that is part of the lure of the modern dance. There was exchange of whispers, glances. Through it all, like a low, tremulous call to love, shimmered the music.—But she was watching.

One of the men was her husband. She knew what the other was telling him. One of those charming friends of her own sex had taken

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special pains that evening to distil like poison into her ear the news that Ralph—the man who was talking to her husband—was engaged to Cora Langham.

The woman who told her had narrowly scanned her face to note the effect upon her of the sudden announcement. But all it evoked, was an indifferent, “Oh, really?” and a curious smile that might mean anything, but looked so much like a sneer, that her informant, disconcerted by such unexpected composure, launched into a nervous panegyric of Ralph’s fiancée.

“So sweet!—So naive and unsophisticated!—At least that’s what *we* all think. And so clever!—Those exquisite gowns she wears, and her people not a bit well to do, for a girl who goes out so much.—Makes them all herself! Told me so.—And isn’t she just the dearest little thing in the world in them?—We’re all so glad for her, and for Ralph too.”

“Yes?”

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And still that curious smile, so provoking because it implied so much, yet told so little. Her informant had counted upon being able to flit about the ball-room telling people how the married woman, whose name during the past year invariably had been coupled with Ralph's, had taken the news of his engagement to Cora. In point of fact, she hadn't "taken" it at all, and at present was looking indifferently across the room, where Ralph stood talking to her husband:—that husband, who was considered a model of his kind, because he had either been blind to what everyone else saw, or pre-occupied with an affair of his own, which, however, he had conducted with so much discretion that no one had been able to discover the woman. Now, seeing his wife looking in his direction, he slipped his arm with easy familiarity through Ralph's and piloted him to where she sat.

"Bess, Ralph has an interesting piece of

NEWS

news for you." Then he left him standing, sheepish and undecided, before her.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, looking up at him with her prettiest smile, for she knew every woman in the room was staring at them, "you don't have to tell me. Everyone is raving about it—your engagement to Cora!—You've just told Jim, haven't you? Wasn't he pleased?"

"He was bully about it!"

"He ought to be. He knows her *so well*."

"Really?—Cora has only mentioned him once or twice, and then just casually."

"That may have been from motives of delicacy."

"I don't think I quite understand."

"Oh, I see. She hasn't told you. Jim, of course, wouldn't. Why—er—my dear Ralph—she and Jim—that is to say—Well—you must have happened along just about as Jim was getting tired of paying her dressmakers' bills and other very personal, not to say *in-*

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timate, expenses; with her people—whom you won't find any too refined, anyhow—beginning to take advantage of the situation and 'laying down' on Jim for anything and everything.—I must say, Ralph, it's fine, real Christianlike of you to take her off Jim's hands. No wonder he's so 'bully about it.' He ought to be.—Don't you think so?"

She stopped, looked up at him with a cheerful little laugh. It was easy for her to see that he was convinced of the truth of what she had told him. It tallied too well with certain suspicions that had begun to creep into his own mind, in spite of himself. She noted how, involuntarily, he clenched a fist. Then he recalled where and in whose presence he was; straightened up, bowed, and sauntered off—but not in the direction where Cora was sitting.

II

"I can't say he looked as if the last five minutes were the most joyous of his life.

Serves him right though, for not letting you know like a gentleman, instead of leaving it to that cat, who was sitting with you a little while ago, to tell you."

"That's why you led him up to the slaughter?"

"That's why."

She raised her cigarette, and took a whiff. The curve of the hand, the poise of the fingers, the pursing of the lips, as she emitted a delicate ring of smoke, were exquisite.

"Cutting out all the dead wood between us, Jim, how would you like to have me for your little playmate again?"

"Shall we begin by showing these idiots how to dance?"

She rose, placed herself in his arms, and, together, they glided into the ball-room, while everyone stared.

IV

LOVE

I

HE was one of the greatest portrait painters, American, but living abroad and over here only on one of his infrequent visits. He was in my studio; other painters had dropped in to see him, and the talk naturally had drifted from other topics to his work.

"Maruja?" he said, repeating a question one of us had asked. "No, I haven't kept track of her. Perhaps I should have. It was the Luxembourg's purchase of my portrait of her that laid the foundation of whatever reputation I may have. But—" He broke off and looked gravely around the circle.

"Of course," he resumed at last, as if moved by a sudden impulse, "some of you remember her. Maruja, Spanish dancer—black hair,

LOVE

burning eyes, sinuous grace of motion—every step, every gesture, even every pose subtly adjusted to rhythm—the incarnation of the wavy line in music. They used to tell a story in Boston—where my people come from—of Emerson and Charles Eliot Norton at one of Fanny Ellsler's performances.

'Ralph,' whispered Norton, 'this is art.'
'Charles,' returned the Concord philosopher, 'it is religion!'

"Art the dancing of Maruja surely was. Religion it as surely was not. Rather it was magic—music, with all its strange potentialities, liquefied into action. This woman trod mysterious measures, overtones of motion no one else had dreamed of, making rhythm visible, giving it form and color, transmuting it into all things man had ever yearned for or desired. Such dancing! The height of abandon, the depth of quiescence, with uncanny hints of unrest still vexing the surface—a mere ripple of the body, a slight swaying from the

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waist up, a narrow line of white gleaming from behind slightly parted lips, the poise of a cobra ready to strike!

“Tensely you waited for the forward thrust, to learn into the heart of what man the fangs would sink; also you believed everything you had ever heard of her—not only of her beauty and her wonderful art, but of the ruin she had always left in her track. The story of the young French sculptor who had suddenly leaped into fame by modeling a stunning portrait relief of her—and poisoned himself soon after; of the Spanish poet who had dedicated his finest sonnet to her—and ended in a mad-house; of the Russian diplomat who had squandered a fortune on her—and blown his brains out—these were just samples. There were many others. But those of us who understood the ‘grand temperament’ also understood her. She was no mere dancer. She was one of those great artists, to whom love was but a means of shedding and renewing emotional tis-

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sue ; a thing to be flashlited a thousand times, yielding each time a new image on the plate ; an adventure passionately entered upon, yet coolly scanned as regards development and outcome ; a succession of experiences from which she enriched the technical resources of her one great passion, that to which she dedicated everything and everyone—her art. The ‘grand temperament’ feeds on love and picks the bones clean. Its victims, like the suicides at Monte Carlo, are but vaguely missed. Their exit is subdued, deadened. They go to the scrap heap with the rest of the discarded machinery of the world. Often the ‘grand temperament’ finds a strange lodgement and is discovered where least expected. It chanced that this time it had elected to manifest itself in the person of a woman who danced.

II

“All these things *he* should have understood—would have understood, if he hadn’t been so

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handsome and so accustomed to having women fall in love with him. Almost every other person, man or woman, said he reminded them of a young Greek god—though none of them had ever seen one. But what they meant was that he had the form and features a great sculptor would have rejoiced to model; that he was an Apollo, re-created for their unconsciously half-pagan world to worship all over again; and that he took its adulation as his prerogative. People who ought to know say the Greeks painted their statues. But they would have had difficulty in reproducing the sheen of his fair, wavy hair, the deep storm-blue of his eyes, the clear pink of his complexion and the general sparkle and animation of his manner. (I tried a portrait of him and gave it up—the only thing I ever gave up.) It was wonderful how the tide always set toward him. You could feel the stir when he entered a room, and the movement of eyes, talk and interest in his direction. And yet he didn't un-

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derstand that, often as he had played with fire, she might be the once too often; that skillfully as he had hitherto managed to steer clear of treacherous reefs, the coast of her Bohemia was strewn with wreckage.

“Into all his other ‘affairs’ he had gone with his eyes open, like the leading man in a play; and when it was all over, and the curtain rung down, there he was ready to be cast for the lover in the next comedy, with another heroine eagerly waiting to go on. But this Spanish dancer was a heroine of a different type. She bided her time and made her choice. I recall the first night she saw him. She had been here a month without finding anyone she loved well enough to destroy. Suddenly, as I watched her, the smoldering fire in her eyes flashed into a clear flame. Whatever part of the stage the dance carried her to, the flash was always in the same direction. I followed it, and at the end of it sat *he*,

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his blue eyes shining back with the light they caught from hers.

“You must know that if there is a task more ungrateful than trying to save a man from himself, it is trying to save him from a woman. I discovered that when I tried to warn the man in this case. I reminded the man of the ruin she had wrought. I even confirmed some of the stories that were current about her. For she had filled engagements in Paris, when I was massier in Carotin’s studio, and later on she appeared in Madrid, when I was copying Velasquez portraits in the Prado; and again in Florence, when I was there. But he had a ready answer to everything I said: ‘She really hadn’t loved any of these men—only thought she had. It was different with him. He had touched the deepest chord in her nature. She had told him so herself.’

“‘The deepest chord in her nature!’ It is useless to argue against that ancient fallacy. When I tried to, he lost his temper, accused

LOVE

me of being jealous of him, because I'd painted her portrait without her falling in love with me. Of course it would have been a vain effort for me to have attempted to explain to him my theory of portraiture—that the artist should hold himself wholly detached from his sitter, regard her in a purely objective, analytical way, although he may employ a technique that is most personal and subjective in putting what he sees on canvas; that I sling my paint as I want to, but see my sitter as she is and for what she is; and that thus I had seen Maruja.

“But he was too good—of his kind—to let go by the board without further effort. If only as a unique specimen of the genus homo from an artist's point of view, he was worth it, and he was a nice sociable chap besides. I also must own to a slightly selfish motive. His portrait had baffled me and I wanted to try my hand at it again. So I went to see the woman. From the way she spoke you'd have thought

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her passion for him so intense as to be lasting. But when I asked her if she had any idea of marrying him, she emitted three pretty rings of cigarette smoke and watched them float away as if she were lost in studying their airy grace.

III

"The rest is quickly told. He followed her to Paris, and in due time there was a brief cable in the papers saying he had shot himself at the door of her apartment in the Rue de Prony. I was over there some months later and asked her about it.

"‘Ah, yes,’ she sighed, ‘It was too bad. But he kept coming to the apartment and making scenes. The Count—Oh, I forgot you never heard of the Count! Is he with me now? No. Poor fellow, he was found in the Seine a few weeks ago. Well, the Count—you see, he paid for the apartment, and, as he objected to the scenes, which were rather trying, I had to tell your friend that he musn’t

LOVE

come here any more. When he found out next day that I meant it and that he couldn't get in, he shot a hole in his head right on the stair landing and made a horrid spot on a handsome new rug in front of the door. It had to be thrown away.'

"Once more she emitted three pretty rings of cigarette smoke—which was one of her minor accomplishments—and watched them float away and melt into space. Then to me: 'I had hoped, my friend, that you had come over here to ask me to pose for you again.'

"You see the Luxembourg had meanwhile acquired my portrait of her, and I suppose she felt flattered by a new kind of vogue this had given her. Fortunately—perhaps—I had others to paint. Moreover"—and this he said with a bitterness I never had heard in his voice before—"there was a beautiful new rug at the door of her apartment with her initials exquisitely woven in a center medallion, and it would have been a pity to spoil it."

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IV

When the gathering broke up, one of the younger men, who had come back from Paris later than most of us, stayed behind with me. A certain restlessness on his part had struck me during the telling of the portrait painter's story. Even now he walked about the room as if to look at the pictures, though he barely glanced at them.

At last he turned abruptly and said: "They were still talking about her in the studios when I was over there. She was in love—desperately in love—with one man; and they say he never even knew that she cared for him. In the end it broke her up and she disappeared from the stage."

"And who was the man?"

"The artist who painted the portrait of her that hangs in the Luxembourg."

V
MAN

I

HE had been waiting for some time. She was engaged with her lawyer, and could not come downstairs immediately, the butler had told him.

He was in the drawing room. It was furnished with impeccable taste, and at the same time so comfortably, that the fortune spent on the many rare things in it, didn't stick out, like so many pins to irritate you.

She was wealthy. That was one reason he had proposed to her. He himself was so rich that he would have regarded with suspicion any woman of ordinary means, who might have sought to "make up" to him. It pleased

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him that her wealth eliminated all taint of mercenary consideration from her prompt acceptance of him. The suggestion received by him through her lawyer, that, prior to the wedding, less than a fortnight away, a settlement, commensurate with his large means, should be made upon her, had at first struck him disagreeably. But reflection had convinced him that it was a business detail a woman of her fortune might regard as a wise and necessary preliminary. She was bestowing herself upon him, and besides being wealthy, she was fine looking and one of the most brilliant women he had ever met. That morning her lawyer had brought him the necessary papers. Probably he was upstairs now informing her that they had been executed.

She had been married before; and more than once, he understood. He had not asked for details. Coming from "the coast," where matrimonial adventures long ago ceased to

MAN

startle, whatever might have happened before he appeared upon the scene, did not interest, let alone alarm him. Nor had he ever inquired about the source of her wealth. It was hers. It did not concern him. It was there. That was all.

He was just reaching out, to take up a book from a small table nearby, when he heard the lawyer come downstairs and go out. He knew that she would enter the drawing room in a few moments.

II

He had never seen her look handsomer. Her evident high spirits gave her a heightened color that was most becoming. He did not like to ask the cause of her elation. It might be the promptness and liberality, with which he had acted in the matter of the settlement. If she wished to thank him, she would.

"I'm so sorry to have kept you waiting," she said.

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Her tone of voice was not only apologetic, it was delightfully sympathetic. The delay was worth while, just to hear her regret it.

"No doubt," he said deprecatingly, "you had important matters to talk over with your lawyer."

"He manages all my affairs, and so well. Just think! (Again the heightened color, which was so becoming.) He came to tell me that, some time between now and our wedding day, he will be able to turn over to me the fourth million left me by my third husband!"

With a little sigh that was charming—since it had in it a mingling of sorrow for the past (which was most appropriate), together with confidence in the present and future (which was delightful)—she gently laid a hand on his.

"I have always been most fortunate in marrying generous men," she said.

"I'm sure," he responded, with an effort at being gallant, unusual with him, but prompted

MAN

by the delicate sensation of her touch, "they would congratulate me, if they were here."

"Ah, yes," she murmured, as she moved a little closer to him. "I think they would. They were such good things!"

VI

SHOW

I

“**D**IDN’T you know? Yet why should you —you were out of reach of all local news when it happened.

“But to think that his death should have been nothing more than ‘local news’! Therein, my dear fellow, lurks the tragedy of his life. Read his last letter to me! He had just read my ‘Dreamers’ and wrote to congratulate me. Your mention of the book reminded me of the letter. Be sure to return it. I consider it unique. Don’t you?”

And so he was dead, had been dead two years according to Graham—and I ignorant of it. But, as Graham said, it was local news, a paragraph tucked away in the obituary col-

SHOW

umn probably referring to him as "a frequent contributor to the magazines and Sunday newspapers," and telling what he died of, but not mentioning one of his contributions by title. Poor Archie! He was one of those free lances—who survive everything they write. His little nugget of reputation was buried with him, like the coins in ancient urn-burial to provide passage money for the journey to the borderland—if so, the only expense Archie ever was prepared to meet on a cash basis.

Where I had been—the wilds to which a mining expert's work is likely to take him at any time for an indefinite period—no news but of events that move the world ever penetrates and, even then, not until long after the world has ceased to move and has settled back again to await another shock. Needless to say Archie's death had not been a world moving event, but the fact that I was two whole years behindhand in hearing about it did not deaden the shock to me. Indeed I was signally

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unprepared for it, since when I reached London, about a month before I received Graham's letter, and was looking over a file of American papers, I saw in one of those omelets known as the "Sunday Color section" a humorous column signed by Archie and entitled "Husbands of Famous Prima Donnas and Why They Did It."

It was easily accounted for now that I knew. Probably it was the fag end of a lot of Archie's "stuff" that some literary agent had had in hand. Oddly enough, although Archie had been dead two years, the column was timely, for the "ad" of the opening of the opera season was on the opposite page. It was like Archie to be "timely." "Timeliness" was his curse. It was one reason why everything he wrote had been so ephemeral. He had reduced his work to a system. He was aware that certain fixed events, functions and entertainments recurred with unfailing regularity about the same time every year and he pre-

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pared for them well in advance. About February he got his Horse Show stuff ready for the following November. In April, when the editors were planning their Christmas numbers, he would work over his stock feature, "Christmas in Many Lands," throw in some new pictures and deal out the old deck to the latest syndicate. The "timely" string was attached to everything he wrote, and someone had pulled it even two years after his death and made his ghost dance in the humorous column. If the souls of the dead are sensible of what happens on earth, how Archie must have groaned when he heard the presses grinding out "Husbands of Famous Prima Donnas and Why They Did it." Of all the things that he abominated most it was the cheap humor he wrote, but it sold readily—and he had a wife and children, whom he adored, to support.

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II

Archie was one of those men who begin their career with achievements full of promise, only to disappoint their friends and, worst of all, themselves. His obituary, according to Graham, said heart failure. I knew better. It should simply have been failure. When he was only twenty-two he wrote and sold a short story—"Ideals," it was called—a little tragedy of the artistic temperament, that was perfect of its kind. If he could have followed it up then and there with a dozen stories equally good, his reputation would have been made and he might gradually have trained himself for the more sustained effort needed to produce a novel. But—he was too much in love to wait; and, himself without means, he married, on the strength of that one initial success, a refined and charming girl but, like himself, penniless. He forgot that he had worked over that story for two months, writing and re-writing it, filing away at each sentence,

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until every word in the story was the right word in the right place; and that for that two months' work he had received about enough to live on for a week.

Of course there was to have been no desperate need of money when Archie and Helen married. Oh no!—They would live in a garret and cook in a chafing dish, so that he could write leisurely and yet support her and himself on the proceeds. But their garret turned out to be a charming little suite of rooms and their chafing dish a fairly expensive hotel restaurant nearby. I don't doubt they inspected a garret and I don't doubt either that he saw the disconsolate look on Helen's face. There was no sacrifice he would not have been willing to make for his art—if he had been alone. But he was not alone now and the one sacrifice he couldn't make was to see her unhappy.

Well—as soon as they were settled, he wrote another story, and it was rejected by one magazine after another. It was too obviously a fall-

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ing off from the first. He had written it too hurriedly.

He was in desperate need of money now. There was only one way out of the predicament. He went, was forced to go, on the staff of a daily newspaper as a reporter, and there he acquired that fatal facility for tackling any subject that came up and writing entertainingly, but, after all, only superficially about it. Later, it is true, he worked himself out of the newspaper rut and into the periodicals. But here too he "handed out 'timely' stuff," as he used to put it—stuff that obviously was suitable to the occasion, cleverly written, and quickly accepted and paid for. He had to write it because he always was in need of money. He and Mrs. Archie had started the wrong way. She always wanted something a little better than he could afford to give her—and he always gave it to her. The result was that, whenever money came in, it was mortgaged long beforehand to landlord, butcher,

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grocer or dressmaker, very frequently, indeed, to the last; for Mrs. Archie was a pretty woman and always dressed becomingly. She called it "keeping up her looks for Archie," who meanwhile was dictating potboilers to a typewriter.

Once I remember, when I asked what he was working at just then, he answered with a shrug:—

"Oh, the same old thing: I'm what they call a 'trained writer,' you know;—a man who can write on any subject without betraying his ignorance of it."

He spoke rather bitterly, which was unusual. Mrs. Archie looked up quickly.

"Never mind, Archie," she said. "Don't get discouraged. Some day our boys will be in business and our girls married. Then you won't have to work so hard and you and I can take a dear little house somewhere in the country all by ourselves, and you will have time to write all those fine things your mind is so full of."

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For answer he went over and stood beside her, and, placing a hand on her shoulder, he looked down at her so tenderly that for me there was a world of pathos in his simple action. For, while there was unspeakable love in his look, it also was strangely wistful, as though he failed to discern that problematical "little house somewhere in the country" at the end of the vista, and realized (wondering she didn't) that he stood at the prime of life when a man should be doing his best work; and that, if the leisure she spoke of so confidently, ever came, it would find him a worn out hack. Yet all he said was:—

"I am sure, dear, the best thing I ever could do would be a poem worthy of you."

Outwardly at least, save to the keen eyes of a friend like myself, he was reconciled to his failure because she was the cause of it. His last letter to Graham, written only a short time before his death, showed that.

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III

"Dear Graham," it began. "How can I thank you for having sent me this early copy of your 'Dreamers'? You know what the book means to me, how I fairly revel in everything you write! The tenderness, the delicate vein of psychology, the pathos, the tragedy, which alternate in these pages, show how responsive every chord of life is to your touch. You have searched the human heart and reproduced its throb.

"Can you, who have known me so long, not understand how strongly the title of the book appeals to me? 'Dreamers'! Am I not at times the veriest dreamer of them all—a dreamer of beautiful dreams that never come true? My 'Ideals,' for example. When that was accepted and printed—so many years ago, it seems to me now it must have happened to some one else—did I not dream of a triumph such as yours?

"But you, my friend, are a genius, while

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I simply am 'timely'—curse the word. I thought I was a genius once, but that is over. Let me tell you how I discovered that I wasn't. A genius sacrifices everything to his art. Friends, wife, children are as nothing to him compared with it. Their very unhappiness simply is so much material 'from life' for his pen. Do you remember when I dropped in to see you and you told me your wife had left you? I began stammering condolences. You ripped a sheet off your pad, crumpled it in your hand and threw it into the waste basket.

'That's all it amounts to—one blank page less in my life!' you said. Then you told me you had just finished a story and you read it to me—your 'Mirage.' My dear fellow, it was, unconsciously, full of your unhappy experience with your wife. She was the 'Mirage.' Even the phrase about the 'blank page' occurred in it.

"Well—I am not a genius. There isn't anything, Art with a capital A included, I

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wouldn't give up for Helen and for our children. In fact from your point of view, haven't I given up everything for them—everything, I mean, you and I valued when we were young and ambitious? But I have given it up for a woman's love which is the greatest thing of all! Sometimes, it is true, I think of 'Ideals' and dream of what might have been. But I always wake up before it is too late—you know I am so damned 'timely'!

"You might put me in a story and call it 'Sacrifice.' Only there must be no 'blank page' about it, but one with 'LOVE'—my love for Helen and hers for me—written all over it.

"So long, old man,

ARCHIE."

This was the second time I had read the letter; and now I noticed a memorandum in pencil and in Graham's handwriting as a sort of postscript.

"His wife married again six months ago,

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has a lot of new clothes and looks prettier than ever. Her second husband has loads of money and gives lots of things to her and the children. They're beginning to call him 'father.' At least it isn't the old familiar 'Dad' with which they used to rush to welcome poor Archie. 'Mirage'! 'Sacrifice!'—How about that 'blank page' now?"

VII

HORSE

I

WHAT I have always congratulated myself on most is that I didn't lose my head and let any one see how jealous and unhappy I was—that is, no one but the mare. I made her my only confidante, because I knew she would understand and keep it secret.

The mare!

Never was there her equal. I have ridden since I was a little girl. The trophy room in our stable is full of cups and ribbons. I know a horse when I see one, and between us, Tom and I own so many we could mount a whole hunt. But once I'd tried out the mare I vowed I'd never ride to hounds on any mount but her.

It was Tom bought the mare for me. She

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hadn't quite filled out, and we had the joy of watching her become what we knew she was going to be—perfection itself. Even when standing still you felt the latent grace of motion, knew that every step, every inclination or raising of the head, every arching or straightening of the neck would show perfect articulation of limb and flex of muscle. Her coat was soft and glossy, and when you stroked her you sensed under the smooth surface all her potentialities of grit and speed. Clean limbed, agile, I don't suppose there ever was a horse easier to handle or who took her jumps with an outlay of action so accurately proportioned to height and distance. It seemed a gift, like genius, with her, and she was so all my own that even Tom never had ridden her and had said no one ever should ride her but myself.

That's why it seemed as if everything were tumbling about my head when Tom turned to Lady Maude and said, "Suppose you ride the mare."

HORSE

II

Tom and I have been chums for ever so long. It was horse that brought us together, horse that made us marry, horse that has given us that interest in common every married couple should have to be happy. We even became engaged on horseback. We were riding when Tom proposed. I gave my mount a clip, looked back to make sure Tom knew enough to follow; then, at the psychological moment. pulled up and surrendered. My mother used to say it was lucky we hadn't children, because they'd run about on all fours and neigh instead of talk. We shoot, we golf, we use the automobile to get around in. But our hobby is horse. Even in England there are few country seats where they can mount a week end party as we can, and there is nothing over here to compare with our string of hunters. We live in the saddle; have hunted everywhere—England, Ireland, France and, of course, here. But our favorite hunt is at

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our winter place in the South—up and down and on the flat; timber, water and stone; sand, meadow and woods. Nowhere is there a more varied terrain for cross country riding. Tom is master of the hounds, and pretty much the whole hunting set follows us down there. If there are any English fox hunters—men or women—over here, they too are apt to turn up in the course of the season.

That accounts for Lady Maude.

Lady Maude accounts for Tom having said, "Suppose you ride the mare."

The mare accounts for his never having said it again.

The mare! Every time I think of her I long to stroke her neck and have her put her nose on my shoulder while I rub her along the under jaw, which she adored.

III

I admit the hunting set is not exactly what you would call slow. It travels without a

HORSE

speedometer and has no one to flag it at the crossings. As a natural result the matrimonial upsets are out of proportion to the census. But Tom and I are noted, I might say even notorious, for adoring each other. I fancy he would find life pretty dismal without me and I know I would without him. We don't set ourselves up as censors; we simply don't understand what pleasure other people take in being unhappy. But I knew a week after Lady Maude arrived that I was unhappy myself, because she and Tom were being talked about and I was being gloated over, or, what was worse, pitied by the other women in our set.

We had hunted with Lady Maude's uncle in England, and he had put us up for a fortnight at his country place. She herself had been away, but when her uncle wrote us that she was coming over here we asked her to stop with us part of the time, especially as we could offer her the best hunting in the States. It has

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been my experience that the English male or female never fails to connect with a promising invitation, and in due time Lady Maude arrived. She had the reputation of being the speediest little fascinator in the English sporting set, and the manner in which she started in to make good was enough to take any other woman's breath away.

Tom is good looking, splendidly put up and sport to the core. With the skill of an experienced huntress Lady Maude proceeded to set invisible snare nets for him—that is, invisible to him, but not so to me, since, being a woman, I know something about invisible nets myself. Her type was absolutely different from mine, and she made the most of it—insinuated it at Tom as a kind of agreeable novelty. She was petite and soft, with a purr in her voice and a pussy cat way of nestling in her chair. Her dressing was perfect for her style, the two extremes of tailor made to the last stitch, or light and clinging, with fur

HORSE .

and marabout effects. She had wavy chestnut hair—a lot of it not her own, but Tom wouldn't believe me when I told him—and brown eyes that looked larger than they really were, because she had the art of “assisting” down to the finest possible point.

With Tom I have always stood on an equal footing. I know as much about horses as he does, and when I don't agree with him I say so. I may be a bit peppery and he a bit obstinate at times, but all's well that ends well, and half the sport in a happy married life is the times you make up.

But Lady Maude at once ingratiated herself with Tom—dear old Tom!—by her pretty way of deferring to him, as if his authority were something to be accepted without a question. She even raised those expressive brown eyes of hers to me in apparently unstudied surprise when I started to argue a point with him. It was a new sensation for Tom. So it was for me. I had to be mad and be a lady too, and

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that's pretty hard, but I succeeded. For whenever the mad threatened to get the better of the lady, and that was pretty often, I'd go down to the stable and tell the mare—tell her all about it and how unhappy I was. She'd snuggle her soft, glossy face up to mine, and I knew she understood. Then I'd go back to the house thoroughly calm and composed—at least I thought so.

But, appear unconcerned as I might, there was much gloating over the fascination Lady Maude seemed to have for Tom by people who were jealous of our leadership in sport or secretly envied us for getting along so well together when they had made such a failure of it. Isn't it funny how all failures envy the others, though they've had just as good opportunities? All the people who'd been divorced, or were going to be—all the people who'd come matrimonial croppers—doted on Lady Maude. And, what is more, some of them coached her—told her about the mare and

HORSE

what a triumph it would be if she could get a chance to ride her. I suspected it from the moment she began to play her hand for it.

IV

The Benhams were lunching with us when finally she led up to the point. It had been this mount and that, and some little fault found with each, until Tom, who didn't suspect the plot laid for him, said:—"Suppose you ride the mare?"

I saw the quick look of common understanding that passed between Lady Maude and Mrs. Benham, while Benham was just slow enough and stupid enough to stare at me to see how I'd take it. There was a moment of suspense, just enough to make Tom realize what he'd done and give a sudden start. But he'd blundered into it, and it would only make matters worse if he tried to blunder out of it, as he appeared on the point of doing.

So I simply turned to the butler and told

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him to call up the stable and order the mare saddled for Lady Maude.

That charmer and Mrs. Benham again exchanged looks. Benham was on the point of blurting out something—probably a compliment at the way I had taken the thing, which would have been fatal—but fortunately checked himself in time. Tom sipped his coffee and looked rather uncomfortable, though once or twice he glanced furtively and I thought gratefully at me.

I was wondering how the mare would take it.

In the hall afterward Tom manouevred himself to my side. "You're a brick!" he exclaimed, with unfeigned admiration.

"And you?"

"I'm an ass. I admit it. I've been one for the last ten days. I admit that, too. And you're just splendid. But what I want to know now is what your mount is going to be this afternoon?"

HORSE

"I shan't hunt."

"Oh—please—do come along. It won't be like a hunt without you. Don't let her spoil it for both of us."

"She won't," I said. And as it turned out, she didn't.

V

Half an hour after the hunt started there was a ring at the 'phone. It was the stable. The mare had come back—alone. There was a singular note of suppressed glee in the stable boy's voice as he conveyed the information.

I ordered the mare brought up to the door, mounted her and rode off in the direction I knew the hunt had taken. On the way I met the huntsman bringing in the pack. He stopped to tell me what had happened. Everything had gone all right up to the four rail fence around the ploughed wheat field. There the mare, instead of taking off, had suddenly stopped short, and Lady Maude had gone over

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her head and into the field. Fortunately the ground was soft, and she hadn't been badly hurt. A broken collar bone was the worst, and, of course, she'd been considerably shaken up. They had sent to the nearest house, the Benhams', for a car, and were taking her there.

As I rode down the hill toward the field, Lady Maude was being lifted into the car, and as it started the group that had gathered went off in various directions. But Tom, who saw me coming, waited. He was rather surprised when he noticed that I was on the mare.

"Is she all right again?" he asked.

In the most casual way I put her at the fence. She cleared it like a bird. Then I gave her her head. This time I didn't look back. I knew Tom would follow.

What a gallop! How we simply tore across country—through fields, over fences,—I slightly in advance, he holding his own in pursuit. At last I slowed down. When he caught up with me he leaned over in his sad-

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dle, put his arm around me and kissed me. Then we jogged home. It was our engagement day all over again.

At dinner, after a silence in which he appeared to be thinking hard, Tom suddenly exclaimed, "By Jove, she's clever!"

"Who? Lady Maude?"

"Hang it, no! The mare!"

VIII

SONG

I

“**D**O, re, mi, fa!”

The “Corridor” was the hall on the sixteenth floor where all the vocal studios in the building had been located or more properly speaking concentrated—this in final deference to protests from tenants on other floors who had been driven to desperation by the weird sounds produced by youthful aspirants in their efforts to acquire from us the rudiments of vocal art. We were high enough up to escape the noises of the street which was fortunate, since the “Corridor,” as already implied, had noises of its own. From our windows we overlooked a wide expanse of roofs clear to the river, with the heights on the opposite shore.

SONG

Frau Hilka—Frau Mathilde Hilka, the retired German prima donna who taught “after the Bayreuth method,” whatever that might be—was the only woman on the “Corridor,” and it is not too much to say that we of the “Corridor” adored her. She was whole-souled and ample enough to “mother” us all.

That “mothering” was a godsend to us. Like all Bohemians we were at heart a lonely lot. Though we never confessed it to one another, we were aware that when we were asked for an evening to a pupil’s house, we simply were invited as utilities—to play accompaniments and do the artistic act for the benefit of the company. Then back to the “Corridor” to shed “sassiety” with our claw-hammers and next day take up the old routine of *do, re, mi, fa*.

What would we have done without the little after-the-opera experience meetings over German dishes in Frau Hilka’s studio? And how good naturedly at these gatherings she would

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break in upon arguments that threatened to run into bad temper! That time, for example, when Benno Loeb and Caro Miranda almost came to blows over discussing the comparative merits of their methods of voice-culture, and she got us all laughing, the two disputants included, by asking, "What is 'method,' anyhow?" Then defining it herself as "some-dings you print on a circular"—which is about all it amounts to.

Well as we knew Frau Hilka, there was one subject she never had touched upon with us. That was Hilka. Who and what he was, or had been, she never had told us. One night, late in the spring, when they were giving special performances of the "Ring," and we had been to the "Walküre," the talk at supper chanced to turn on the Siegmund of the evening. This led some one to ask her whom she considered the greatest Siegmund she had ever heard. She did not answer at once. She seemed lost in memory and, when at last she

SONG

spoke, it was like some one coming out of a revery. We concluded we were going to hear something about Hilka, and so we did, but not in the way we'd expected.

II

"The greatest Siegmund I ever heard?" she began. "You never was hearing of him. He had not sung out of Germany when he died, he was so young. His name was Karl Leseborn, and, if he lived ten years more, mit his beautiful voice, he would have been famous the world over. But he had a terrible fall—from the top of the rocks in the second act of 'Walküre,' in the fight mit Hunding. It killed him. Karl was Siegmund. I was Sieglinde. My husband, Joseph Hilka, was Hunding."

How clearly, in a few words, she had placed the scene before us! We could see the stage setting—the rocky height rising in the background; the two men battling among the clouds, could almost hear Sieglinde's agonized

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shriek as she saw Hunding's savage thrust and Siegmund's fall, to his own death instead of a mimic one. And she, Sieglinde, the wife of Hunding—what had been her relation to the tragedy, the rough yet vivid outlines of which she just had given us? Would she still keep it locked in the silence of years, or—Ah! She was continuing!

“Karl was a handsome boy, and myself—well, they called me ‘die schöne ’Thilde.’ Karl’s voice? It was beautiful, shoost beautiful, and that is the only way to describe it. We sang the leading rôles in a small German opera house, and some of the old opera goers of the town, who were young then, still speak of us. Yes, it was wonderful the way we inspirationized each other. Our duet singing!—We could feel our voices grow warmer and warmer as we sang along and, when the climax came, we was trembling all over mit excitement.

“Of course we fell in love mit each other.

SONG

We shoost couldn't help it. But it was a small opera house and small pay, and we couldn't afford to get married. It would have been a foolishness. So—well—it was nobody's business—we didn't. It was very beautiful, what you call 'ideal' and, like all dose kind o' dings, it couldn't last. For 'ideal,' it always means, that the man he go away, and 'leaves the girl sitting,' as we Germans say. That is what Karl did, only it wasn't altogether his fault. A great opera director happened along and heard him sing and promised to pay his expenses for three years if he would go to Italy and take singing lessons and after that he would make a five years' contract mit him for one of the big opera houses.

"We singers are artists first and men and womens only afterwards. So Karl he go. We had a very sad goodbye, and, of course, he would come back to me—but he go shoost the same. I cried, and the other womens of the company, who were jealous of me, used to talk

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about Karl for to make me unhappy. So, after a while, I married Hilka. It was a foolishness to do, but I was lonely; and, when I had done it—I was more lonely. Hilka was a big man and very dark, and said very little. You know I was born to be gay and sociable and to talk, but he always was so big and solemn, like a trombone or a bass tuba that never plays anydings lively. He was a splendid Hunding mit his burly figure and black bushy eyebrows and hair. But to be his wife was too much like living mit a real Hunding all the time. Ach! How different he was from Karl! He was like one of the inside rooms here, where the sun never shines into and where it always is dark, no matter how bright the day is outside.

Well, it was a long time, but at last news comes of Karl. He has made a great debut and the city where he was singing is wild over him. I was reading about it when Hilka came in. He strode right up to me and took the paper from me, and he crushed and crushed

SONG

and crumpled it in one of his big hands, that were like iron, and, when he threw it into the waste basket, it was a hard, tight ball, like it had been pressed in a machine. He stood before me and looked down at me from away up, he was so tall, and said noddings. That was a way he had when he was mad—to stand there big and dark and say noddings.

“When I got to the theatre at night, I found out what was the matter mit him. A notice was posted saying that for the special night on the Grand Duke’s birthday the next week Karl had been engaged to sing Siegmund. The cast was posted too. I was to be Sieglinde! Karl and I was to sing together, like old-times!

III

It was only a week off. It seemed like a year. But at last the day came and I wondered what our meeting would be like. Hilka had gone to the theatre. I was in my own room looking over my Sieglinde costume and think-

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ing of Karl—wondering if he had changed, if he still was so handsome and still sang the Love Song mit so much feeling. Then too, as we do when we have a rôle to sing, no matter how often we have sung it before, I begin going over the opera—how Sieglinde hears some one enter and finds the wounded stranger lying on the rug before the fire; how—But shoost then, as if it was in the opera itself, there is a knock, the door opens, and some one comes into the sitting room. I go to see who it is, and there stands Karl, as handsome as ever and looking at me shoost the same way.

For a long time we only talks mit our eyes, and then Karl walks right up to me and takes me in his arms, and I let myself go and throw mine arms around his neck and cry, and cry, and cry, because I am so happy. Ach! It was so beautiful like Paradise! Karl he began to whisper how he will never leave me again and how I must go away mit him that night after the performance is over, and I creep closer

SONG

into his arms and cry some more; and he strokes my hair and calls me his 'schöne 'Thilde' again and says how it is he has come like Siegmund to find his Sieglinde. And then I hear the street door shut mit a bang and Hilka's heavy treads in the hall.

"Karl and I start away from each other, I wipe mine eyes mit a sleeve, and we sit down on the sofa and make believe we have been talking. Hilka he stands in the doorway looking from one to the other from under his black bushy eyebrows, till I say:

"'Joseph, this is Herr Leseborn. Don't you remember him?'

"Karl had gotten up and was holding out his hand. Hilka took it and he look so big beside Karl, like he could crush him, and he smiled; and when Hilka smiled, it was worse than when he scowled. Karl was tall, but Hilka was like a giant beside him and like a thunder cloud, he was so big and dark. Then he sat down and Karl sat down, and there we

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sat, each waiting for somebody to say something first, till Karl he gets up and says how he must go over his rôle before evening and we would meet at the theatre.

“I wonder what Hilka is going to say to me. But he does as if I wasn't in the room at all. He goes to the piano and turns the leaves of the score, and, when he comes to his own rôle, he lifts his big hands and he brings them down mit a crash on the Hunding Motive; and I see Hunding in his black bearskin robe, mit his black hair and scowling face, standing there like Fate and searching out Siegmund and Sieglinde mit his eyes. He was not a pleasant man, was Hilka, but I will say for him that he was a great Hunding. It was as if Wagner had seen him and written the rôle for him. But it would have been more comfortable if, after Karl left, he had taken me by the throat and choked me instead of playing that motive. It was as if he had read Karl's heart and mine and was saying to me:

SONG

“‘So—you think your Siegmund has come back for you? Well, here is Hunding!’

IV

“Karl was a splendid Siegmund, tall, slender, mit a handsome face and a beautiful voice; and such a fine actor, graceful mit every motion! The moment I came on the stage and saw him beside the hearth, it was like old times again, and, when the 'cellos played the Love Motive, we looked at each other mit hungry eyes. Such eyes as Karl had!—large and bright like stars. Ach, they was beautiful to look into! I could see myself in them, and I knew he could see himself in mine, and that we was like looking glasses mit each other. And I knew too what I had been sure of ever since I had seen him again, but hadn't dared breathe even to myself: That when he went away that night, I would go mit him—yes, run away from Hilka and the whole business—and that we would be everything to each other for-

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ever, shoost as we had been before, because I knew now what it was to be married to a Hilka, a big man who didn't talk, but made you feel in the dark by looking at you—and then—I hear the Hunding Motive on the horns, and there stands Hilka looking at us. I feel creepy all the time he was on the stage. Even when I was supposed to have given Hunding a potion and put him to sleep, and had come back to Siegmund, I kept watching the door for fear Hilka might come out and look at us and say noddings.

“It was when Karl was singing the Love Song and had drawn me close to him, that I whispered in his ear how I was ready to go away. In the orchestra the violins were throbbing. A harp was tinkling like a fairy bell. The violas and 'cellos were murmuring like little waves. The horns were breathing. An oboe was sighing. And above them all a clarinet was soaring mit the Love Motive. You know the scene. Who can forget it? A

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rush of wind has swung open the door of Hunding's dwelling. Outside all is moonlight. It trails down the hillsides and lies on the meadows. Everything—the trees, the grasses, the sounds of the spring night—is pulsing in unison mit the lovers' hearts; and as Siegmund, my Siegmund, who has come to take me away, draws me closer and closer to him, I feel my heart beating faster and faster like the rapture in the music, till it seems as if the world held but one thing, and that was Karl's voice singing of love! Ach, mine friends, it was the great moment of my life, and I wish I could have died right there in his arms and felt my soul floating away on that sea of sound that was surging round us! Then it might all have come out so different! But—

* * * * *

‘ Siegmund, gaze on me!
I am she whom soon
Thou must prepare to follow.’

“We was well into the second act, the scene

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mit der Death Prophecy, when Brünnhilde tells Siegmund he has to die. All during the time between the acts, while they was building the high platform for the rocks and all during the long scenes before we went on, we had seen noddings of Hilka. I wondered what he was thinking all mit himself in his dressing room, but Karl he only laughed and we sat down on a rock that wasn't to be used till the third act, but was all ready to be shoved on. Karl was very happy, but myself—I kept seeing Hilka's dark face all the time and I was glad when we got our cue and went on.

“You remember how it is. Sieglinde enters a little before Siegmund. They are fleeing from Hunding. She is going crazy mit fright and, when she hears Hunding's horn calling his peoples to join him in his man hunt, she faints mit a cry in Siegmund's arm and he lets himself down on a rocky seat and draws her down mit him. I heard the Love Motive like a memory of bliss, as Karl leaned over me

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and kissed me. I opened my eyes to look at him—and there in the wings stood Hilka. That made me draw back and Karl, thinking I wanted to creep closer to him, opened his arms for me a little, and I see a smile curling around Hilka's lips. Then I hear the Motive of Fate. Brünnhilde, in the shining helmet and breastplate and the flowing robe of the Valkyr, is before us like a creature from another world. And behind her, in the shadow of the 'wings,' leaning on his spear, stands Hilka, waiting shoost for to give me the pleasure for to see him scowl at me once more before he goes back to climb up to the high platform at the rear of the stage and wait there for the fight mit Siegmund.

"The time was almost come. I could see the gauze cloud drops float slowly down from the flies. Karl rose and rushed up the runway to the rocky summit to meet Hunding. I saw the brilliant light and Brünnhilde in it urging on Siegmund to victory; a reddish glow, and

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Wotan shattering Siegmund's sword; den Hunding making ready to kill!

"You know how they do those things on the stage. You poke the sword or spear between the other man's arm and body, and it looks like it pass through him and come out mit the back. Well—I saw Hilka make a savage thrust at Karl, then, as Karl fell, give a quick move sideways mit the shaft. It was a very little motion and, maybe, no one else but I who was watching so close, notice it. But mit Hilka so strong like a giant, it sent Karl staggering to one side in his fall. He reached out his hand to check himself and struck against the back drop. The canvas swung back, the painted rocks mit their light wooden framing, the only thing between Karl and the edge of the platform, crumpled beneath the weight of his body, and then—

"They say my shriek, Sieglinde's shriek that is in the 'business' of the scene, was terrible. I remember Brünnhilde, her face all

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white, a wild, frightened look in her eyes, rushing on the stage for me and how she was trembling when she dragged me off into the wings. Behind the scenes people were hurrying toward the rear of the stage. Up on the platform Wotan was declaiming the last lines of the act. This was a performance; we were artists, and, no matter what had happened, the music and acting could not stop only mit the fall of the curtain. Everything begins to swim before my eyes. I sway to and fro and then tumble over into Brünnhilde's arms.

V

"I had told Karl I would go mit him and I did. But it was to bury him. He had fallen thirty feet and struck mit the back of his head on the stage. He never moved, never spoke, never opened his eyes again. Of course it was an 'accident,' a terrible accident, so they all said and so they all thought. He must have slipped or something like that, and hadn't

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Hilka been a wonderful Hunding? Yes, a wonderful Hunding! Who knew that so good as I;—but what should I say and who would have believed me?

“As for myself, the director of the London opera house, who heard my Sieglinde that night, followed me to Karl’s home where the funeral was held and offered me an engagement. He made the money advances I asked for—and I never went back to Hilka, never saw him again. He is dead long since, and I hope the devil has introduced him to all the other Hundings and they are shoost standing there looking at each other and saying nod-dings.”

* * * * *

Being a calm spring night the windows were open, but all we heard through the silence that followed Frau Hilka’s narrative was the faint whirr of a trolley car passing far below. Beyond the desert of roofs between us and the river, we could see an occasional dot of

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light where some house stood high on the Palisades on the further shore; the green and red lanterns of a ferry slip and boats creeping in and out like huge phosphorescent water beetles. How different from that wild passage of painted rocks and clouds where, as just related to us, a mimic tragedy had been turned into a real one!

Caro, whom, in his sentimental Italian way, we half suspected of being in love with Frau Hilka, was the first to break the silence. He looked a little white and hopeless, but he did the correct thing. Rising and lifting his glass, he said:—

“To one in Valhalla!”

And the “Corridor,” standing, drank a silent toast to the Siegmund who was no more. Then we quietly crept back to our studios leaving Sieglinde alone with her memories.

Next day the old routine:—“Do, re, mi, fa!”

IX

NERVES

I

“**D**EAR,” said my wife, as I started to go downstairs for my office hours, “you *must* see Mae Barry in ‘Chic.’ There’s been nothing like it since Maude Adams did ‘The Little Minister.’ Mae Barry’s the cleverest girl on the stage—a sure cure for melancholia. Prescribe her for your patients. As for yourself, you need a tonic too. If you can get off tonight, I don’t mind going with you, and seeing the show all over again myself.”

She was right. Not only would I send some of my patients to see the clever young actress, who had made such a hit in her first starring rôle that they had rushed her into New York long ahead of her original booking, but I

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could not help thinking what a relief from the atmosphere of my office would be afforded by an evening at the theatre with a cheerful play and an attractive young actress, whose art seemed to run the whole gamut of comedy. There is no doubt that, at times, a nerve-specialist's practice gets on his own nerves. An evening's diversion to take my mind—and my nervous system—off my patients, would be the ounce of prevention that is worth many a pound of cure.

As usual, when my office hours are about to begin, I found myself wondering how many of my patients that morning would be new and unknown to me. For my custom is, when a stranger comes to consult me, to have my secretary take the name and address in the reception room, so that I can make the diagnosis without being aware of the new patient's identity. My theory is that a purely impersonal diagnosis is more apt to be correct than one possibly swayed by preconceived notions

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created by a knowledge of who the patient is. I shall not go into the pros and cons of this method. Suffice it to say that I have a large practice and that my fees are high. As a wag among my colleagues once put it: "Only the wealthy can afford nerves—and you."

That morning there was the usual run of people;—some who really needed looking after, others for whom I prescribed mysterious looking pills, to which I gave a highly scientific sounding name, but which were made of bread coated with an innocuous coloring matter. To several patients, however, I strongly recommended a visit to the theater, to see the clever Mae Barry.

II

My office hours were well along, when, in response to my signal for the next patient, there entered a young woman who was a total stranger to me, but whose personality interested me the moment the door closed behind

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her. For even before she had reached the chair beside my desk, I had observed her fine, sensitive features; and this, although at the moment the whole face lay, as it were, in the shadow of a most profound melancholia. Never have I examined a patient, who more completely aroused my sympathy. The girl's condition was pitiable, her outlook upon life correspondingly tragic. From the uttermost depths of her dark, expressive eyes, she seemed to plead with me for help.

Needless to say, hers was no case for bread pills. Her nerves required a gradual building up. But if with several other patients that morning, I had been glad of the opportunity to prescribe the relaxation of an evening with the new comedy star, I almost felt like offering up a prayer of gratitude to Providence, for making it possible for me to advise this unhappy girl to witness the performance of an actress, who, from all I had heard, was a very sprite of comedy.

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I wrote out a prescription and handed it to my patient with a few words regarding the regimen I wished her to follow. She listened to me with a mournful look, as if she recalled many other occasions when she had received these little white slips of paper, accompanied by verbal exhortations that had proven futile.

"And now," I said, settling myself back in my chair, "there is one other thing I have to order. It is neither medicine, nor diet, and I doubt if you have ever had anything like it prescribed for you before. But I know that it cannot fail to benefit you and may even cure you. So long as Mae Barry is in town, I want you to go to see her as often as you can."

"Mae Barry?"

"Yes," I urged, "Mae Barry! She'll take you out of yourself—amuse you—make you laugh."

Her eyes, as she looked at me, seemed to reflect the sorrow of the ages.

"I am she."

X
ART

I

FOR several years previous to my acquaintance with Herman Richter, his face had become familiar to me as a frequenter of classical concerts. On these occasions I had watched him with great interest. He would usually enter the concert hall with sullen features, and drop into his seat with the air of one, who, wrapped in meditation, becomes oblivious of all surroundings. But, under the sunshine of melody the clouds upon his brow floated tremulously away, until when he leaned forward listening eagerly to the music, his features relaxed, as though, weary of his own thoughts, he turned with relief to commune with those of another.

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At one of these concerts we happened to occupy adjoining seats, and I ventured to address him concerning the performance. He seemed so embarrassed that I almost regretted having spoken to him, but as the warmth with which I continued, betrayed my deep interest in music, his manner lost much of its hesitation and his conversation grew fluent, at times even enthusiastic. That evening's talk led to subsequent discussions, and our mutual regard finally ripened into a close friendship. As he was more than nineteen years of age when we first met, I was surprised to find that I was his only friend; but, as our intimacy developed and my understanding of his character became more complete, this circumstance explained itself.

He was in the shadow of peculiar circumstances. I found a disposition by nature ardent and affectionate. As a child, already his only desire was to love and be loved; but a fervid imagination so exaggerated his bashfulness

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that, in time, it became a lamentable want of self-confidence, rather than a fitting modesty. His excitable temperament, while it magnified his expectations, equally intensified his disappointments and frequently I have heard him express deep regret at the frustration of a trivial hope. His parents died when he was very young, and after their death he was obliged to live with a distant relative, so cold and unsympathetic that, until he made my acquaintance, there was no one to sweeten the bitterness of his thoughts. For these reasons I allowed him in the beginning of our friendship the comfort of my society as much as possible. Soon, however, I began to regard as a pleasure what I had first looked upon as a sacrifice.

His secluded life made music almost his sole enjoyment, and his keen appreciation of the beautiful gave him a thorough knowledge of the masterworks of the art. He was most in sympathy with those composers whose sen-

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timents never degenerate into maudlin melancholy or whose intellectuality never throws a fog over their subject. The former, he contended, had followed through life a lofty ideal. This ideal he believed to have assumed the shape of a beautiful woman, whose form ever floated before their eyes, and with whom their thoughts were ever in communion. He himself claimed to have a similar ideal, and would describe her to me in terms of such extravagant admiration that I believe he had then already conceived a deep passion for some woman who at that time lived in his thoughts only, but whom he hoped one day to possess.

Though he was a clever pianist, I could not persuade him to play before anyone but myself. He could never overcome his nervousness, his fear of failure, and that intense bashfulness I have already mentioned. So he had placed a piano in his private apartment, and he could not be persuaded to perform on any

other instrument, or in the presence of others than myself, his only friend.

I had chosen an artist's life, and many a pleasant evening we spent together, he looking over my sketches, criticizing them candidly, but always encouragingly, while I was constantly exhorting him to cast aside his shyness, because I thought he might become, with proper instruction, not only one of the first pianists of the day, but also a leading composer—for he excelled in improvisations, and his intuitive knowledge of harmony and counterpoint was remarkable. It was his purpose, when he had become of age and obtained possession of the property left by his parents which sufficed for a competency, to visit Europe and study music with the best foreign instructors; not with any intention of appearing before the public, but simply to gratify his artistic impulse. As the course of instruction I had mapped out for myself included similar travels, we determined to journey together.

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This was not a very difficult matter to arrange, inasmuch as musical conservatories abroad are usually found in art centers, where the musician can draw inspiration with the artist and the poet.

II

At last we started on our journey, and without having anything special happen to us, we arrived at a small town in Germany. Here our first inquiries concerned art matters. For in these ancient places there is generally a picture-gallery containing many old paintings and a small number of modern works. From what I could learn at the inn, the local exhibit seemed unusually attractive, but I was tired, and decided to defer my visit until the morrow. Herman, however, was restless, so I asked him to see the pictures and give me his estimate of them. He assented, and after he had departed I began to arrange our baggage, and attend to matters which this involved.

About half an hour afterward I glanced

out on the street, and, to my surprise, saw Herman approaching with unusual haste. A moment later he rushed into the room. I had never seen him in such a state of excitement. His cheeks glowed, his eyes were unnaturally brilliant and his voice trembled as he ejaculated while he gripped my arm:

“Come! Come! you must see her! She is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen!—More beautiful even than my ideal!”

His manner was so earnest that remonstrance died on my lips. So great was his haste that I had difficulty in keeping pace with him, when I attempted to retard my steps, he would hurry me along by the arm, exclaiming:

“Come! she is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen.”

At last we came to an old building, and this we entered. He hurried me through the hall and several rooms, without noticing the surrounding statues and antiques, until we reached a room whose walls were covered with paint-

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ings. Here he halted and looked around. I followed his glance until it rested on a small, dark passage-way which led into another room. Two houses had evidently been thrown into one, for the passage-way was unusually long—and I accounted for this by the fact that it was cut through two walls whose thickness was part of the thorough architecture of olden time. His hasty manner became more subdued, and he approached the entrance as though he were nearing a sanctuary. He did not enter, but stood before it gazing at some object within. As I joined him I beheld, immediately opposite in the other room, one of the most beautiful faces I have ever seen. Though he did not tell me, I knew he must have recognized in it the pictorial embodiment of his musical ideal.

I forgot for an instant that my eyes were resting on a canvas, there was such living beauty in the features before me. It was an exquisite portrait of a young girl. The breath

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of roses lingered upon her cheeks, and her deep blue eyes peered through the golden hair that fell in idle ringlets over her brow. The painter appeared to have chosen a moment when her thoughts were far above this earth—her dreamy, absent gaze seemed to rest upon some far off vision of a pure imagination. The passage-way was dimly lighted. Around about her hung desolate paintings by some unknown old masters; and this fairy creature shone through the darkness as of a dreary night the rays of a solitary star break through the sombre heavens.

For a long time we remained gazing in silence. Then I asked:—

“Who is she?”

“I do not know,” he said, in a nervous, tremulous voice. “I do not know, but we will soon find out. This picture arrived here recently from Paris. I have the name and address of the artist. I never heard the name. He must be a young man. He will show her to me. I

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must see her. I must know her. We leave here early tomorrow morning. In two days we can be in Paris. If you ever loved me help me now, for I cannot help myself.'

Poor fellow! I pitied him for his nervous excitement. I could not move him from the spot until darkness set in, and we were informed we could no longer remain in the building. He spoke of nothing but the picture the entire evening. It had so played upon his imagination that I saw any attempt to dissuade him from visiting the artist in Paris would be vain. Even when he fell asleep while I was preparing for our journey, I noticed that his dreams were troubled and his slumbers restless. So I hastened the preparations for our departure, and next day we started.

III

We reached Paris on the evening of the second day. A drizzling rain chilled the atmosphere, and it was a dreary night. Herman

had been so nervous that he had scarcely closed his eyes during the journey. I was alarmed at his condition. But he turned a deaf ear to my entreaties to rest, and insisted upon seeing the artist at once. His manner was so urgent that I saw opposition would be a waste of time; so I hailed the nearest conveyance. As I gave the driver the address, he said, hesitatingly:

“Is Monsieur sure of the address? The distance is great, and but few travellers go to that part of the town.”

I again asked Herman to desist, but to no purpose.

The miserable weather caused the better parts of the city to look gloomy enough. But, as we hastened on, the surroundings grew gloomier still, for the streets became narrower and lonelier, and I noticed we were fast approaching a desolate quarter of the city.

At last we stopped before a dingy-looking house. As we neared the doorway we heard loud, quarrelsome voices within; then a heavy

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fall, and oaths in quick succession. I had not the heart to knock, but nothing could stay Herman. As the door opened, our eyes rested upon a loathsome spectacle. A woman in the stupor of gross intoxication was lying on the hall floor, a strong odor of spirits pervaded the place. Poverty, hunger and despair were depicted in the features of the man who ushered us into a miserable room, which seemed to serve as kitchen, bed-room and studio. But I knew we were in the right house, for on the wall hung a copy of the picture we had seen two days before. My friend saw it immediately, and said:

“Are you the artist who painted that picture?”

“I am,” was the reply.

“I will give you all this,” said Herman throwing down a handful of money on the table, and pointing to the portrait, “if you will show me who sat for you.”

As my friend leaned anxiously forward to

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catch the reply, I could not tell whether a look of pity or a sarcastic smile predominated in the artist's face.

"That picture, Monsieur," he replied, "is a portrait of my wife before we were married. You have seen my wife; she is the lady lying in the hall. When the original picture was exhibited, a great future was predicted for me, but—" He pointed in the direction of the prostrate woman in the hall.

After the artist's first words Herman grew pale, and trembled so violently that I sprang to his side to support him if necessary. When the artist had finished, I grasped my friend's arm and hurried him out.

As we passed the woman he gave her a glance of despair, and then looked back at the picture. I dragged him away, and ordered that we should be driven with all possible speed to the nearest hotel. I felt alarmed for Herman. He did not speak a word; he seemed listless to all I said, and trembled violently.

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When we reached a resting place I sent for the nearest physician. He arrived to find my poor friend in a raging fever and calling deliriously for the picture. When, on the third day, his fever and delirium increased, the physician pronounced his case hopeless.

A week after we reached Paris, Herman Richter died, in his twenty-second year.

XI

STREET

I

The prison walls were so thick, and the narrow, heavily barred windows so deeply recessed, that little enough daylight crept through even in bright weather; and on this stormy winter morning the panes were covered with a moist gray film, as if a fog had rolled its pall around the building.

Three heavy iron gates led from the prison office. One opened into a grated enclosure, which was as far as people seeking information concerning prisoners could penetrate without a permit; the second was at the foot of the stone steps which ascended to the police court; the third led through a deep, dark passageway to the prison.

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A gray-haired turnkey stood with his back to a stove, his face utterly immobile. The procession of the abandoned and vicious had filed past him so many years that the tragedy or the occasional comedy of it no longer made any impression on him. A keeper—a short, stocky, bullet-headed, smooth-faced young fellow—sat behind a desk chewing at the end of a penholder.

There was silence except for the rumbling of carts in the streets (muffled by the thickness of the walls) and the rustle of coal settling in the stove, until the keeper began whistling "Two Little Girls in Blue" as two policemen came down from court, each with a young woman prisoner.

One of these women faced the keeper at the desk with a smirk, though her heavy bang and the scarlet feathers in her hat were bedraggled, and her skirt left a wet trail on the stone flooring.

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"Hello, Tillie!" said the keeper. "Jugged again, eh? What's done it now?"

"Too much calamity water, I guess," was her reply.

"Age?" he asked, as he prepared to make the formal entry in the blotter.

"Sweet sixteen!"

"Great Cæsar!" he exclaimed. "You've grown two years younger since the last time you were sent up!"

"Of course! 'Ain't I had my hair bleached?" she cried, with a coarse laugh. Then she lowered her voice: "Say! Don't be rough on that girl there. She's kind o' sick, an' I guess she's seen better days than any o' us others." She turned toward the prison gate. "Hello! if yous 'ain't gone and stuck a horse-shoe up there for luck!" she cried.

"That means," the keeper called after her, as she disappeared in the passageway, "that we'd rather some one would pay your fine than we be obliged to give you a free ride in the

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Black Maria!" Then he turned to the other prisoner.

A slender, fragile-looking girl, of perhaps not more than eighteen, stood beside the desk. She rested a forlorn, hopeless, pathetic look upon the keeper. Traces of her former delicate beauty were still discernible. Her hair was brown and wavy, and she had large dark eyes—all the darker, perhaps, for the deep circles beneath them, and her poor, thin, pale face.

The keeper lowered his voice as he asked her the usual questions, and she answered them in but little above a whisper. When he had finished, she stood there helplessly, not knowing what to do. Suddenly a tremor passed over her, her cheeks flushed, and she reached out to the desk for support as her slender frame shook with a deep, hollow, convulsive cough. When she recovered, the turnkey touched her arm and pointed to the prison entrance. She shuddered, and walked slowly into the gloom.

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"About time for the angel, ain't it?" asked the turnkey of the keeper.

He had hardly spoken when a young woman, accompanied by a maid, entered the grated enclosure. The keeper hurried to the gate and admitted them, taking the lady's sleet-covered umbrella. She had a pleasant word for him. Indeed, her presence seemed to brighten up the office. Even the turnkey straightened himself out a bit and looked pleased to see her. There was something attractive and sympathetic in her manner that was certain to win the confidence of the unfortunate. She was of the best type of philanthropist—a "prison angel"—giving not only money, but her time and personal efforts, to prison mission work.

"There's a girl upstairs who was arrested in a raid last night," said the keeper. "I'm sure she was never here before, an' she seems sick and miserable."

"Thank you for telling me about her. I'll

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“speak with her and see if I can do something for her.” After a little pause she added, “I’m to be married soon, and, beginning next week, there’ll be some one here to take my place, while I’m away.”

“There’ll never be any one, miss, can take *your* place here,” the keeper said, heartily; “an’ I’m sure many’s the prayer for your happiness that will go up from the unfortunates you’ve comforted.”

When the turnkey had opened the prison gate for her, he called up through the tube to the matron of the women’s prison,

“The angel and her maid!”

She went up two flights of steps. The matron, a stout, comfortable-looking woman, met her with a pleasant smile, and opened the heavy iron door which led from the landing to the prison.

The latter was a structure within a structure, for the two tiers of cells were built up inside the prison, and there was considerable

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space between them and the thick outer walls. The air was pungent with disinfectants here, as down in the office, and everything was more cheerless than usual for the dismal day without.

On low, backless benches ranged along the wall were a few women. One was reading a pink-covered paper novel; another tried to hide her tear-stained face behind a newspaper; others simply sat swaying to and fro, their hands clasped in their laps, and stared, in a forlorn, vacant way, at the cells. A glance told the visitor that the girl she was looking for was not among them.

She felt a touch upon her arm, and saw Tillie, whose face was familiar to her. Following her gesture, she observed a young girl flung face down upon the iron stairs that led to the second tier. A shock passed through the prostrate figure, as at that moment a violent "drunk" in one of the cells began cursing and shrieking and rattling at the bars.

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"My sister," said the visitor, "tell me what I can do to comfort you."

It was so long since the poor girl had heard a gentle voice. It vibrated with sympathy; it was so different from the harsh sounds of the police court and the prison that it fell like music upon her ear. At the same moment she felt a kindly touch.

She turned and looked up. It seemed to her that an angel of mercy was bending over her. That fair brow with its halo of golden hair, the pitying look in those kind blue eyes, the sweet cheering smile—the gentle bearing that bespoke the compassion of a pure soul for one that has sinned—touched her heart as nothing ever had before. Her whole nature was drawn toward the angelic creature who appeared to her in her darkest moment. Her impulse was to fling her arms around her and cling to her; but she shrank back, as if she felt that her own sinful touch would carry pollution with it. Just then she saw a bunch of

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violets in the visitor's bodice, and reaching for it, she drew it out, inhaled its fragrance, and showered kisses upon it.

"They are as pure, as fair as you," she murmured. She seemed to kiss them because they were to her part of the immaculate ministrant who was bending over her, to whom she was drawn, yet feared to touch. A sweet smile told her she might keep the flowers. A moment later she was clutching one of the cold iron stair-rails and coughing convulsively. But she retained her hold upon the violets.

II

At 8.30 P.M. Brother Allen went out on the steps of the Isabel Mission and rang a bell.

He had not always been "Brother Allen." He had begun his ministerial career as the Rev. Theodore Romaine Allen, and as assistant to the rector of a fashionable church, and had he, like the rector, been willing to preach sermons that were comforting chiefly because

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they were comfortable, he might have retained his sonorous title.

But Allen's ambition was to become a worker rather than a preacher. He considered one kindly act worth a hundred sermons. While at the seminary he had utilized his spare hours in visiting the various missions in the slums for reclaiming those who never could be reached in any other way. The services and work there were to him religious clinics, each new experience seeming to him worth hours of theoretical study. He felt himself amply rewarded by the broadening of his views and by exhilarating discoveries (often in the least expected quarters) of noble traits—fortitude in suffering, parental and filial devotion and self-denial, which showed that some pure gold could be refined from this mass of human ore.

Soon, however, he found himself attracted more and more by the work at the Isabel Mission, named in memory of a child whose

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mourning parents had established the fund for carrying out a noble project. And when, after one of his sermons at the church at which he had been appointed assistant to the rector, the latter intimated that he had been injudicious, he at once resigned, and offering his services to the mission, plunged into work after his own heart.

The Isabel Mission had its quarters in what had been a fine mansion in its day. It was built of drab-colored brick, and the low, foot-worn steps led up to a portico with classic columns. The iron step railings ended in graceful curves, and old-fashioned pineapple-shaped ornaments surmounted the newel-posts. It was not to outward appearances in the slums. Its surroundings wore the bedizened front of the most insidious of all vices.

The services were held in a large room on the ground floor—two of the old rooms thrown into one. At the rear end was a platform with a reading-desk. On the floor near the plat-

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form stood the organ, from the top of which hung a large horseshoe of immortelles. Between the windows in the rear were two banners—one, white with a flaming red cross, and "Holiness" embroidered in gold; the other, black, with the words,

Doubt not the cross you bear
Flowers of Eden yet will wear,

also in gold. From above the old mantel the sweet features of the little girl in whose memory the mission was founded looked out upon the women, who came in from the street. Many in the motley crowd helped themselves to hymn-books from a pile on the floor near the organ, and dropped into their places as if used to the ways of the mission; others looked embarrassed; others stared immodestly about them.

Allen heaped an arm full of hymnals and walked down the aisle, distributing them among those who had not helped themselves.

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When he had taken a seat on the platform he called out, "No. 5!" and, after a prelude on the organ, "Lost but Found" resounded through the room. Many sang without even opening their books. They had been to the mission so often they knew the words as well as the tune.

A door led from the old rear room into the hall. Seeing a number of women hesitating in the entrance, Allen walked, still singing, with his hand extended in greeting, and showed the first woman in the group to a seat. Most of the others followed; but he still saw in the half-light of the hall a pale, sad, delicate face, which he had lately missed. He was shocked to observe how it had wasted away even during the short time since he had last seen the girl at the mission. He knew that she and Tillie, who was with her, had lately been "sent up," and judged they had come off the "Island" only that day.

As he took her by the hand to lead her in, he

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noticed that she was leaning on her companion for support, and as she entered, she dropped into the first vacant chair against the wall, Tillie remaining beside her.

When the hymn was ended, and Allen paused before giving out another, so that any one in the meeting might have a chance to ask for a favorite, she whispered to Tillie, and the latter called out, "No. 156!"

Without waiting for the organ, Allen intoned, in a sweet, tremulous voice,

"I shall walk with Him in white."

The poor girl did not sing. She leaned her head against the wall, and stared across the room at the portrait of the child over the mantel. The hymn finished, Allen read from the gospel, and then called for testimony from any one present.

"Jesus came to me in Yonkers last Friday!" excitedly exclaimed a woman among those

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near the platform. "He has been with me ever since. May I never desert him!"

"Jesus, lover of my soul."

sang Allen. Organ and congregation joined in. Words and music were familiar, and the worshippers sang with inspiring power. The very walls seemed to vibrate with the volume of sound. Uplifted by the enthusiasm, Allen, at the conclusion of the hymn, burst into a fervent address:

"We thank Thee, O God, for this patch of praying-ground, this oasis of Thy faith. Baptize Thy servant with Thy power, that he may touch some heart to-night.

"Ah, sisters and brethren, don't put off coming to Christ. The devil never said, 'Don't seek salvation!' Oh no. He is too smart for that. He just says: 'Put it off awhile. You're young yet. You'll find plenty of chances later. Have a good time now!'

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“Don’t listen to him. When God says, ‘Come to Me!’ go at once. Don’t think to yourself, ‘Some other time will do as well.’ That other time may never come.

“Suppose Christ had said: ‘Oh no, I’ll not give My life for them yet. I’ll put it off.’ What hope of salvation would the world have? No doubt the devil would have liked Him to put it off, but He didn’t. And when Christ appeared He didn’t come down from heaven every morning with his dinner in a tin pail, and go back after working-hours. He spent His lifetime on earth, and among the lowly, too. He paid the same price for you as for the millionaire on Fifth Avenue.

“Perhaps, beloved, his spirit is among us to-night. Oh, may it bring some of you nearer to Him! Seek till ye find Him! Cling to Him. For through Him and Him only ye may enter the Kingdom of God!”

“I shall walk with Him in white.”

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These words, sung in a faint but strangely penetrating voice, vibrated through the rooms. The deep, dark eyes, whose look had been riveted to the portrait of the child, were now turned upon Allen. A hectic flush mantled the pallid face. After the first line the girl's thin pale lips moved, but the words and melody were inaudible. She had risen from her seat. Suddenly Allen saw the glance she had turned upon him break. She clutched the back of a chair, reeled, and fell upon the floor.

In a moment he was kneeling beside her, and had half raised her, resting her head against his shoulder.

"She's dying! She's dead!" shrieked Tillie.

But Allen knew better. He had wiped a slight crimson moisture from her lips and felt her faint breathing. In a commanding voice, that found instant obedience, he ordered those who had crowded about the spot back to their seats, bade Tillie aid him in carrying the un-

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fortunate girl up stairs, and as they raised her, called to the organist,

“Finish up with a hymn!”

III

It was a long time before she opened her eyes. Tillie, softly weeping, sat holding her hand. Allen paced the room.

He knew the poor girl's story, and he silently cursed the man who had caused her downfall. If his own brother had at that moment been pointed out to him as the guilty one, he would have sprung at his throat.

Yet it was a case like hundreds, perhaps thousands, of others. The man, whoever he was—for she had never told—had tired of her, had neglected her more and more, and, she being too proud or too unhappy to thrust herself upon him, he had lost sight of her, probably taking it for granted, in that happy-go-lucky way consistent with some men's consciences, that somehow she would be provided

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for. Doubtless if he had known to what condition she had sunk he would have considered it his duty to have aided her; but, curiously enough, he had not considered it his duty to find out what had become of her. The incident had probably not so much as ruffled his conscience.

Why should it have? Though no better, he was no worse than many others. And so at that very moment he might be quietly smoking his cigar at his club, or preparing to go to a dance at Sherry's. As for the human "dere-lict"—she might drift till she sank.

But though inwardly excited, Allen could not fail to observe the change that had come over Tillie. She had evidently been ministering to the poor sufferer while they had been on the "island," and contact with that wasting soul seemed to have softened her whole nature, until, instead of brazen effrontery, a sense of her shame was reflected in her face.

When at last the thin pale lips moved—it

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was not until next morning—Allen, as he bent over the girl, could barely hear, “Would—she—come to me—before—I die?”

He turned inquiringly to Tillie.

“She means the ‘prison angel,’ at Jefferson Market.”

“Miss Northrup?”

Tillie nodded assent.

Allen had frequently met the “angel” through her mission-work. He knew that she was to be married in a few days, and that some one else was taking her place at the prison. But he also knew her noble character, and was sure a note from him would bring her to this bedside.

He had not been mistaken. That evening a cab stopped at the mission. He saw a tall, fine-looking fellow alight first and help Miss Northrup out. He behaved with a happy air of proprietorship which satisfied Allen that he was her betrothed. A few minutes later they entered the sick-room.

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The girl lay with her eyes closed. The lines of sorrow and suffering in her face stood out more sharply from the white pillows. She did not appear to notice the entrance of the visitors. The "angel" cast a look of pity upon her, gently laid a bunch of violets upon her breast, and then stepped over to a table to unpack a small basket. Her betrothed remained standing at the foot of the bed. The surroundings were novel to him, and he seemed to feel a little awkward.

Suddenly Allen felt a hand close upon his arm with the grip of a vise. Turning, he beheld the dying girl sitting upright in bed. Those deep dark eyes, whose glance he had seen break the night before, were now fixed, ablaze with hatred, upon the man who stood there, pale and trembling, stricken with terror, yet, indeed, also with sudden grief and remorse, and who looked beseechingly from her to where stood, unconscious of the scene, the woman who was to become his wife. The girl

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followed his look. She saw who stood at the table, but she quickly turned her eyes from her to the despoiler, whom fate seemed to have brought into her power. Allen knew what was passing in her heart. Should she wreak vengeance on this man, even if it marred the life of the woman who had appeared to her like a ministering angel in prison, or should she leave him to that woman's redeeming mercy?

The missionary, no less than the man whose happiness was at stake, breathlessly awaited her answer, for Allen felt that the future of his mission-work depended upon it. Here was a soul he had hoped to save. Her inborn gentleness, her contrition—though her sin was not wholly or even primarily her own—had caused him to feel that if he could ever lead a sinner to God he could her. If now, at the last moment, she failed him, what hope had he of ever succeeding? Within that frail frame the powers of good and evil were wag-

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ing a fierce strife for mastery. To Allen it was a greater battle than had ever been fought upon an earthly battle-field. It was a battle for a soul. So he hung upon her lips for the answer with scarcely less trepidation than did the man whom fate had so strangely delivered into her hands.

It came at last, though not in words. On the bed beside her lay the bunch of violets. When she had grasped Allen's arm and raised herself, the flowers had fallen unnoticed from her breast. Did their fragrance, rising like a silent prayer, cause her suddenly to look down and see them, and did they, recalling to her the fair form that had bent over her in the moment of her deepest misery, and the voice that had fallen like music upon her ear, mutely plead for mercy?

She released Allen's arm and sank back, grasping the flowers and pressing them to her lips, as she had done in prison.

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IV

When the evening service began Allen and Tillie were still watching. He knew the end was not far distant, but it came even sooner than he thought for.

She had been lying motionless for some time, when she suddenly opened her eyes and tried to raise herself. They lifted her to a sitting posture and propped the pillows behind her. As she looked upwards her gaze seemed to penetrate beyond her surroundings, and to be fixed upon some apparition visible only to herself.

In the meeting below they knew that a soul was about to take its flight, and it was with half-hushed voices, which rose softly and permeated the death-chamber with tender music, that they sang.

“ I shall walk with Him in white.”

XII

END

Here is the letter. "So that no one will know that you get this," reads one passage in it. No one ever would have known, save for the Coroner. At the inquest I had to testify to having received it, and he insisted on having it read into the record, because it established beyond all doubt that she was a suicide.

I knew her but slightly;—drifted here from the Coast, about the same time she did, after the earthquake. She loved San 'Francisco. So did I. That's why she turned to me at the end.

But here, as I said before, is the letter:—

MY DEAR DOCTOR: I am more than sorry that our acquaintance has been so slight that you will look on this last act of mine as a brain-storm. I should like to have you feel that it is

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the surrender of a proud, strong soul to the inevitable. I have the opportunity of going into business here and I am sure that I have those attributes within myself that make for success.

I have already succeeded in whatever I have undertaken, and I am not afraid to compete even in New York. *It is my unalterable conviction of the absolute futility of all things that makes the effort useless.* Even though I obtained the success for which I should strive it could not bring a single hope into my life or joy to my heart; so wherefore the struggle?

Though our ideals have not been very close together I believe that in your soul you will understand the forces at work in mine and that to a woman of my nature and environment life could offer nothing more, especially as all whom I ever loved have passed on before.

I have made arrangements for the disposition of my remains. Will you kindly see that

END

my wishes are carried out and after everything is over write to my sister and tell her about it. She could not possibly come here and you will see how much better it is for her to learn it after she could not feel that there was anything for her to do. I have shipped my personal effects and money to her.

So there is nothing to be attended to. I am very sorry to have to trouble you. It is indeed pitiful that one cannot even die without being a nuisance. I am mailing this myself just before taking the cyanide, so that no one will know that you get this and you will not need to get into print. If anything could be a comfort to me in this supreme hour it is to feel that I have a San Franciscan to appeal to, a son of the place that I love best.

I am grateful for the sympathy and interest you have shown in my welfare and that in itself would have helped me if anything could.

Sincerely,

CLIO DRAKE.

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The surrender of a strong, proud soul, who having faced life, had become conscious of its futility, and realized that nothing is worth while.

To the *Century Magazine*, Harper & Brothers, *The Smart Set* and the *N. Y. Herald*, I am indebted for permission to reprint such of these stories as have appeared before. The letter, in the last sketch, I clipped from a newspaper, most likely the *N. Y. Sun*.

GUSTAV KOBBE.

